



CITY COUNCIL

Public Works Committee

Monday, November 21, 2011
Meeting Report

Committee Members Attending: D. Sterner, S. Marmarou, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz Chair

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, D. Hoag, C. Jones

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, Chair, called the Public Works Committee meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Update Egelman's Park Dam

Ms. Hoag reported that Gannett Flemming has submitted plans and specs for the road repair project. She stated that the project will be bid out shortly and will involve a major amount of stone work. She stated that the project will also include repairs to the upstream bridge and the upper stone dam. She expressed her hope that including all three areas would decrease the overall cost of the project and added that the project will address issues noted in the annual dam inspection report.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the City had a stone mason on staff. Ms. Hoag stated that the City does not have a stone mason on staff. She added that much of the stone can be reused and repointed.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the effect rainfall has on these dams. Ms. Hoag stated that rain flow has some effect but that a larger issue comes from the water that regularly runs off the mountain in this area and the lack of an emergency spillway.

Mr. Marmarou stated that some homes on Hill Road get water in their basements during heavy rain events. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the many underground springs in this area which causes basement issues.

Mr. Denbowski arrived at this time.

Mr. Sterner questioned the financing of the project. Ms. Hoag stated that the project will be paid through the sewer fund as it is related to storm water.

Ms. Hoag stated that she met with DEP regarding the project and that the project does not require DEP permits. She stated that DEP has noted that the dam does not meet current standards and that the need for a spillway will need to be recalculated for capacity. She stated that Gannett Flemming is also addressing this issue. She suggested a spillway similar to the one at Bernhart's Park

Mr. Sterner questioned if DEP will order the removal of this dam. Ms. Hoag stated that DEP likes this dam as it still serves a purpose.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that if the dam is removed, water will continue to flow and cause other related problems.

Mr. Marmarou noted the continual problems with the flooding of Delta Ave. He stated that these residents are upset and feel the City is not addressing the issue. Mr. Jones stated that the City has not received any reports of problems with flooding on Delta Ave. He stated that he visited the site during the flood event at Bernhart Creek recently. He stated that the basin was full but remained functional and that the flooding of Kutztown Road was not flowing into Northmont.

Mr. Marmarou invited Mr. Jones to attend the next meeting of the Northmont neighborhood group to explain.

Update Recreation Commission

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that two Rec Commission meetings have been held. She stated that there is much work to do.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the Board is now full. He stated that Mr. Spencer will need to be replaced in January as one of the Council representatives. He stated that the City continues to assist as needed and has paid for the ad for Executive Director. A selection committee has been formed and there is a December 15 deadline for applications. Once the Executive Director is hired the Commission will need to set its 2012 priorities. Mr. Denbowski expressed his hope that the Commission will increase and improve the summer playground program.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for the Commission to apply for a federal EIN and 501 (c) 3 status in order to open bank accounts. She stated the accounts are needed to pay expenses and payroll. She stated that the Commission is working with the City to keep benefits for employees through the City program to alleviate the high cost of health benefits. She stated that the Commission would rather spend their funds on programming and not employee services.

Mr. Denbowski expressed his thanks to the City's Human Resources and Legal Departments for their assistance. He stated that the current recreation employees will be transferred to the

Commission effective January 1. He noted that COBRA will be used to fill the gap for health benefits until the Commission is organized. He noted the excitement and enthusiasm of the Commission and the great cooperation between the City and the School District.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz reminded the Committee that the Commission is responsible for programming only and that maintenance responsibility remains with the City and the School District.

Mr. Denbowski noted the need to update the City's Park and Open Space Plan. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz explained that the Park and Recreation Advisory Committee has been working on this update. She noted the need for Council to address the future of the PARC. She noted the need for the Plan update to be prepared by professionals in order to qualify for State funding of projects.

Mr. Denbowski stated that the Update must be completed by a planning professional. He stated that Mr. Geffken suggested bidding this project with the update to the City's Comprehensive Plan and making the Park and Open Space Plan one chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. He noted that a new inventory is not needed as there have been no major changes. The chapter will include the vision and planning only.

Ms. Katzenmoyer questioned how this would impact on the work already performed by herself and the PARC. She stated that 18-24 months of work has already been invested. Mr. Denbowski stated that the survey results are current and will be used by the consultant to formulate the plan. He stated that none of the work or time will be lost.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned Ms. Katzenmoyer's suggestion for the future of the PARC. Ms. Katzenmoyer suggested that the mission of the PARC may change but recommended that the group not be disbanded.

River Tribe Project

Mr. Rhodes of River Tribe and Mr. Twyman of Perma Cultivate arrived at this time.

Mr. Rhodes reviewed the maps distributed and stated that he has spoken with Mr. McMahon about the project. He stated that the project would assist the City by clearing out overgrowth and would add a community garden and a healing garden.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if there was extensive vandalism in the area. Mr. Rhodes noted his hope that inviting the community to utilize the space would decrease vandalism. He noted his hope that schools would be involved as well. He described his vision of labeled plantings including descriptions of the uses of plants.

Mr. Marmarou noted the importance of community involvement in projects.

Mr. Rhodes explained that he is the owner of the River Tribe business, which rents kayaks for river tours. He stated that patrons are shuttled to Felix Dam and exit the river at this location. He stated that his business attracts people from New York, New Jersey and the Lehigh Valley. He stated that he is in the area daily and that an outfitter store will be opening in the Canal St building. This will add to the destination.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she walks this area and that it receives the least amount of illegal dumping.

Mr. Rhodes noted the work of the Reading City Church. He noted his willingness to prepare a 3-D walk through tour of the proposed project.

Mr. Sterner questioned what was in the area now. Mr. Rhodes stated that it is currently overgrowth and that he would plant raised beds and add trails.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this could become a very active area. She questioned the impact on the City's facilities. Mr. Jones stated that portions of these parcels would not affect City operations. He stated that the City's 6th & Canal pump station and force main are contained on the parcels. He noted that there will be much construction in this area over the next few years. Mr. Rhodes stated that this should not be problematic. He stated that work will begin by removing overgrowth. He stated that he would begin on the parcel marked "Community Garden."

Mr. Sterner noted that this would remove some work which would need to be done by the Public Works Department. He expressed support for the project.

Mr. Sterner questioned how this initiative should move forward. Mr. Denbowski stated that the Administration suggests that Council approve a lease or memorandum of understanding. He stated that this would become a destination for ecotourism.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz voiced her support of formalizing an agreement.

Mr. Sterner requested seeing the 3-D plan. Mr. Rhodes noted his willingness to provide this information.

Mr. Twyman noted that this project would continue beautifying an area that River Tribe and Perma Cultivate uses on a daily basis. He noted his hope that RACC will also become involved on the riverfront.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that this item be placed on the December Work Session agenda for the full body of Council to see the 3-D rendering. She suggested that this project move forward as the one with Perma Cultivate and begin as a memorandum of understanding and revisit it as necessary. Mr. Rhodes agreed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the work on the force main would affect business. Mr. Rhodes stated that he had to completely shut down during the emergency work as the river was a mess. Mr. Jones stated that the emergency work would differ from the project work. He stated that the river may need to be closed in portions to allow work on the underground force main as it crosses the river.

Mr. Rhodes noted his willingness to pull kayaks out near Penske. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested using the boat launch area. She noted the need for continued education about water safety. Mr. Rhodes noted his willingness to continue water safety education.

Ordinance Regulating Utilities in City Streets

Mr. Jones stated that the City has been planning a street assessment that would have only included street lighting. He stated that the Recovery Plan expanded the assessment. He stated that responses to an RFP were currently received. The RFP requested a cost study and the items to be included in the assessment. He stated that the RFPs are being reviewed and that the preparation of this ordinance was included in the RFP. He stated that items to be regulated include backfill, depth of utilities, and updating of standards for driveways, curbs, etc. He stated that the award of this contract should be before Council shortly.

Mr. Marmarou questioned who would oversee underground items at the former Glidden property. Mr. Jones stated that it would depend on the project that is proposed for the area. He stated that it may fall on Public Works but may also fall on Trades Inspectors. He stated that this would be addressed during the environmental review of the planning process.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if access remained to the comfort stations at 5th & Penn. Mr. Jones stated that this underground area is a mess. He stated that some access remains and that there are many caverns downtown.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the caverns would be mapped during the mapping of the sewer system. Mr. Jones stated that they would not.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that many times utility companies damage curbing during their street projects. She questioned who is responsible for repairs. Mr. Jones stated that the responsibility lies with the company who caused the damage. He stated that not all utility companies will make repairs but that UGI does.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that many curbs are still made of slate. Mr. Jones stated that the City will be repairing and replacing curbs as necessary due to the sink hole at Walnut and Pear Sts.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to continue monitoring Cotton St.

Mr. Sterner questioned if street lighting would be included in the assessment. Mr. Jones stated that it would be in addition to all the other items he noted. He stated that it may also include pothole repair and snow removal. He stated that this assessment would move these costs out of the City's general fund expenses.

Fire Tower

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the Fire Tower has been maintained by Pagoda Skyline who now wishes to purchase it. She suggested that this issue be discussed after the transition to the new Mayor. She stated that there is no current agreement with Pagoda Skyline. She stated that Mr. Reinart should be contacted to inform him of the delay.

Follow Up Items

- Citadel Traffic Issues

Mr. Jones stated that Sgt Fizz has retired. He stated that the stop sign at 12th & Walnut Sts still does not have Council approval and is not enforceable. He stated that he has not heard from the School District with a formal plan for traffic changes. He stated that he will follow up with Mr. Campbell on this issue. Captain Powell is now overseeing traffic and he will also follow up with him.

- Flashing Warning Device at 5th & Bingaman Sts

Mr. Jones stated that construction is occurring. He stated that the signs will be installed and the project complete.

- Seek Sponsorships for parks and park maintenance

Mr. Marmarou noted that the Northmont neighborhood group is willing to become involved with their playground.

Mr. Jones stated that he will be working on this initiative during the winter months. He described his work to find sponsors for the medians on Hancock Blvd from Lancaster Ave to Museum Rd.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that the PARC examine this issue.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that this was part of her Six Sigma Greenbelt project and noted her willingness to share the results with Mr. Jones.

- Fleet Maintenance Contract with Neighboring Municipalities (PW 03)

Mr. Jones stated that he contacted municipalities which neighbor Reading. He stated that some have voiced interest and that he would be reaching out to additional municipalities. He stated

that Public Works already performs this function for the County Sheriff and District Attorney.

Mr. Marmarou questioned partnering with the School District. Mr. Jones stated that he tried this in the past but that collective bargaining issues could not be resolved. He noted the need for additional staff depending on the amount of municipalities willing to participate. He noted that this additional staff should be cost neutral.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC City Clerk